

## The Global Environment Programme (GEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “Supporting the Conservation of Grassland Systems in Africa”

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**Introduction** The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was created after the World’s Environmental Summit in Rio in 1992. The GEF provides funding for developing countries to meet their responsibilities and commitments under global conventions. The GEF is the financing mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention for Combating Desertification (CCD). The conservation and wise use of grasslands can be supported through a variety of funding opportunities. The GEF channels support through Implementing Agencies, of which UNDP specialises in technical assistance and capacity building. The HQ of UNDP is in New York. There are Regional Offices in all continents and offices across all developing nations. The CBD focuses on ecosystems and grasslands form an important part of GEF’s mountain ecosystem and dryland ecosystem programmes. The CCD concerns are accessed by GEF through a new programme for sustainable management to overcome land degradation.

**GEF projects** The GEF works with countries through its Secretariat, based in Washington DC, and its main Implementing Agency Partners (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank). Synopses of four GEF projects via UNDP that are underway or in planning stages in Africa are presented in accompanying papers.

- SABONET: (Southern Africa Botanical Network) which has supported herbaria across southern Africa to upgrade plant taxonomic products (Steenkamp & Rodgers, 2005). The main outputs are detailed grass (Poaceae) checklists for ten countries; plus a computerised mapping output showing distribution of all grass species in southern Africa by Degree grid square. A detailed flora and description of the montane “nyika” grassland of Malawi is a more detailed output
- Montane Grassland Conservation Project in southern Lesotho (Rodgers, 2005). Lesotho, on the Maloti-Drakensberg watershed, has an extensive area of montane grassland and afro-alpine heath, with cliffs and bogs of considerable biodiversity interest. The project has worked with national and local governments and communities to set up small-scale conservation programmes with regulated grazing areas to maintain grassland production and biodiversity values.
- Southern Africa Grasslands Project takes a broad look at the landscape level planning pressures that threaten the highveld grasslands of South Africa (Maze & Rodgers, 2005). These largely natural grasslands are under intense development threat for cultivation, forestry and urban expansion.
- The Southern Highlands Montane Grasslands of Tanzania Project is in preparation (Davenport & Rodgers, 2005). These grasslands, at elevation over 2,800m, harbour high levels of plant biodiversity with several localised and rare endemics. The grasslands are not included within Tanzania’s extensive but mammal-oriented protected area system, and are under threat from cultivation, exploitation, invasions and fire.

**The GEF and grasslands more widely** Many broader GEF projects address grassland issues amongst other ecosystems and other objectives. The land degradation portfolio focuses on arid and semi-arid areas across Central and South America, Africa and Asia. There are projects in the Patagonian grasslands of Argentina, high grazing areas of Morocco, and Pakistan, the arid lands of Kenya and the Mongolian Plains. The World Initiative for Sustainable pastoralism has just been initiated and will promote sustainable rangeland management around the world. Under the biodiversity focal area, the operational programme emphasises dryland systems with several grassland / wooded grassland conservation programmes in Africa (eg Indigenous Vegetation Support in Mali, Kenya and Botswana), and other continents. The multiple agency indigenous vegetation project is highlighted as it shows linkages from on-ground conservation (UNDP), to applied research on arid grasslands through UNEP and the University of Oslo.

### References

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